

PRENATAL TESTING for HIV

*If I'm having a baby . . .
What should I know about HIV?*

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. You can be at risk for HIV and not know it. A woman who has HIV in her body can give it to her baby during birth or while breastfeeding.

How does a person get HIV?

You can get HIV from blood, semen, or other body fluids. You can get HIV if you have sex with a person who has the virus or if you share needles with them. You can have the virus for a long time and not have any symptoms. A baby can get HIV during birth and from breast milk.

What happens if my baby gets HIV?

Most babies with HIV get sick before they are one year old. They often don't grow very well and may not develop normally. Babies with HIV need to take lots of medicines. They need lots of doctor visits and to have to give lots of blood samples.

Is there treatment for me and my baby?

If you know you have HIV, you can get treatment that will help keep your baby from getting HIV. You can also get treatment to keep yourself healthy. If you do not have health insurance, you may be able to get help with the cost of treatment. If you do not get treatment before giving birth, you are more likely to give HIV to your baby.

When should I have a test?

Get tested for HIV as soon as you know you are pregnant. You can get the HIV test at the same time you get other prenatal tests. All women should be tested for HIV if they are pregnant. This is an important step to make sure your baby gets a healthy start.

How is the test for HIV done?

A small amount of blood is taken from your arm for the HIV test. The virus may not show up on the test for those who were just infected in the last few weeks. If your test shows you don't have HIV, ask your doctor if you need to be tested again later.

Who will know about my test?

Only you and your doctor will know you were tested. If the test shows you have HIV, your doctor also has to tell the local health department. This is done for most diseases that can spread to other people. The health department will not tell anyone else.

You can choose to get the HIV test without giving your name. But if the test shows you have HIV, you will have to give your name to get treatment for HIV. If you choose not to have the HIV test, you can still get prenatal care.

How can I learn more?

If you have questions, ask your doctor or nurse. Or call:

National AIDS Hotline 1-800-458-5231.



For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-272-2437.